

A DEFENSE OF THE TWELVE ANATHEMAS AGAINST THEODORET

*Theodoret's Letter to John of Antioch*¹

WHEN I LOOKED at those anathemas that you sent me and asked me to refute in writing so as to make clear for everyone in what sense they were heretical, I was rather shocked. I was shocked that a man who was appointed as shepherd, who was entrusted with an enormous flock, and who was ordained to heal the sick sheep among them, is mentally unhinged, seriously so, and is also trying to infect his lambs with his disease and treats his sheep more harshly even than wild beasts do. Wild beasts scatter the flock and then pick off the ones that have become separated, but this man is right in their midst and is reckoned to be a savior and protector, all the while furtively leading astray those who have trusted him. One can defend against an open attack, but against a treacherous attack made under the guise of friendship one is defenseless and will doubtless receive injury. Hence traitors within are more dangerous than foes without.

I am even more annoyed that he is making all these heretical

1. *Letter* 150. The sequence of items in the *Against Theodoret* appears confusing at first glance but reflects how the conversation was transmitted in the official reports of the council. The dossier opens with Theodoret's *Letter* 150 (probably to be dated to February 431), written after he has received from his metropolitan, John of Antioch, a copy of Cyril's anathemas together with a request to pen a response. This is followed in the dossier by Theodoret's discussion of the first anathema, and only after this do we get the opening remarks of Cyril's riposte, addressed in the form of a letter to Eupotius, outlining what he plans to do after reading Theodoret's comments. His response to Theodoret on the subject of the first anathema then follows. The rest of the text follows the regular pattern of quoting the anathema itself, then "the heretic's refutation," followed by Cyril's defense.

and blasphemous statements in the name of true religion and under the shepherd's dignity. He is simply repeating again the meaningless, and also profane, doctrines of Apollinarius, which were stamped out long ago. To cap it off he is not merely supporting these doctrines, but also daring to pronounce anathemas against anyone who is not prepared to share his blasphemy. This is all, of course, supposing that these productions are genuine rather than being written in his name by some enemy of the truth who has thrown an apple into our midst, as the old story has it, so as to fan the flame of discord as high as possible.²

In any case, whether it was he himself or someone else who wrote all this, I have myself composed a refutation as well as I could, given God's help in furnishing me with the Holy Spirit's aid so as to investigate this hare-brained heresy. I have set against it the teachings of the evangelists and apostles. I have shown how his dogma is totally unnatural and miles away from God's teaching, and by comparing it with what the Holy Spirit says I have shown just how little his ideas have in common with God's.

Against these reckless anathemas, I will retort that Paul was yelling the truth like a herald when he pronounced an anathema against those who had corrupted the teachings of evangelists and apostles.³ He even dared pronounce it against the angels, but not against those who kept within the bounds laid down by the theologians, whom he instead fortified with blessings: "May peace and mercy be upon all those who walk according to this rule, especially on the Israel of God."⁴ May, then, the author of these writings enjoy the fruits of his own work and the harvest of his heretical seeds and feel the force of the Apostle's curse, while we stay within the teachings of the holy Fathers.

I have appended to this letter my counter-arguments. You may read them and so decide whether I have effectively deconstructed his heretical formulae. I have written down each anath-

2. A reference to the Greek myth of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, at which the uninvited goddess Discord (Eris) throws a golden apple in among the guests, declaring that the apple belongs to whoever is the fairest. The strife and discord she was able to arouse among the other goddesses present led to the Trojan War.

3. Gal 1.8.

4. Gal 6.16.

ema and then added the counter-argument, so that my readers might the more easily understand and so that the refutation of these dogmas might be clear.

Theodoret's Critique of the First Anathema

"If any do not confess Emmanuel to be truly God and, on this basis, the holy Virgin to be the Mother-of-God (since she bore in the flesh the Word of God made flesh), let them be anathema."⁵

We, however, who adhere to the evangelists' teaching would deny both that God the Word naturally became flesh and that he was transformed into flesh, since the divine is totally without change. This is why the prophet David says, "You are the same, and your years will not end."⁶ That great herald of the truth Paul taught in Hebrews that this prophecy was made in reference to the Son.⁷ Elsewhere God says through the prophet, "I am the Lord, and I do not change."⁸ So if what is divine is wholly without change, it can never have experienced any change or alteration, and if what is without change cannot be changed, then God the Word did not become flesh by changing into it. Instead he took flesh and dwelt among us, as the evangelist says. Godly Paul makes this quite clear in Philippians: "May you have the same attitude as did Christ Jesus, who, although he was in God's form, did not intend to grasp at equality with God; instead he made himself nothing by taking a servant's form."⁹

Now, these verses make it clear that God's form remained what it was and took a servant's form rather than being actually changed into one. So if God the Word took upon himself living and rational flesh rather than actually becoming flesh, then he was not, in his nature, born of the Virgin, neither was he so conceived, molded, or formed, nor did he who existed as God before the ages, who is with God, and is known and worshiped together with the Father, derive from her the beginning of his existence; rather, he molded a temple for himself in the Virgin's womb, and existed together with what was molded, conceived,

5. This is Cyril's first anathema.

7. Heb 1.12.

9. Phil 2.5-7.

6. Ps 102.27 (101.28 LXX).

8. Mal 3.6.

formed, and born. It is for this reason that we too call the holy Virgin "Mother-of-God," not because she gave birth to him who is God by nature, but because she gave birth to a man who was united to the God that had created him. Further, if what was molded in the Virgin's womb was not man but God the Word, who existed before the ages, then God the Word would be the Holy Spirit's creation, since Gabriel says that "what is begotten within you is of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰

Yet, if the Only-Begotten Word of God was not created and is consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father, then he cannot be the Spirit's creation, and if it was not God the Word that was molded in the Virgin's womb by the Holy Spirit, then it follows that we should understand that what was molded, conceived, formed, and born was the servant's form. Now since this latter was not stripped of God's form, but was a temple which had God the Word living within it, just as Paul says ("for it pleased him that his whole fullness should dwell corporeally within him"),¹¹ so we too can address the Virgin as "Mother-of-God," not just as "mother of man." The latter title refers to what was molded, formed, and conceived, whereas the former refers to the union.

This is also why we name the child who was born Emmanuel, who is neither God separated from human nature, nor a man stripped of divinity. As the Gospels say, Emmanuel means "God with us," and this expression indicates that he is one of us who, for our sakes, was "taken," and it also speaks of God the Word who did the "taking." So then, it is because of God, who took [the man] upon himself, that the child is called Emmanuel, and it is because God's form united with the conceived form of a servant that the Virgin is called "Mother-of-God." For God the Word was not changed into flesh. God's form took upon himself a servant's form.

Cyril's Letter to Euoptius

Cyril, to the most godly brother and fellow-servant Euoptius, whom I long to see, greetings in the Lord. When I came

10. Mt 1.23.

11. Col 1.19; 2.9.

across what your reverence recently sent to me, I was gratified by how well-disposed you were towards me and how genuine must be your love in Christ.¹² I suppose it would be appropriate now to mention that what it says in Proverbs is true, that “a brother helped by a brother is like a strong city.”¹³ And it seems to me that this sort of expression of love is highly valued by the Holy Scriptures, and rightly so, since it is the fulfillment of the law,¹⁴ is greatly superior to the other virtues, and is held in high esteem in the souls of the saints. Indeed, I would add that this love is not brought to fruition by mere spoken words, but by the testimony of real actions. When people see precious stones, the so-called “Indian gems,” they wonder at them not on the basis of what has been written about them, but because of what they actually look like; and in just the same way, I think, does the radiant beauty of love shine out when it testifies to all the best people through good deeds themselves. Your reverence is showing that same love to me, treading in the footprints of the saints, and making their upright way of life redound to your own glory.

I have taken delivery of the volume you sent me (the one supposedly written against the anathemas by Theodoret, who comes from Cyrus—at least I think that is what they call that little rural outpost), and I intend to carry out what is now required of me. When I found out what it contained, I offered up songs of thanksgiving to God, though I also immediately exclaimed, “Lord, save my soul from wicked lips and from a treacherous tongue.”¹⁵ For I find myself denounced from every angle and receiving criticism on each and every one of those headings. I realize, as some well-known people have pointed out, that this opponent of mine is very ready with his words and that, even though he has garnered a great deal of information from the Holy Scriptures, he has totally misunderstood the meaning of the anathemas. So great is this misunderstanding that I can only assume that he is acting the ignoramus to please certain individuals so that he might seem to be criticizing me pointedly rather than [to appear] just like some trivial rustic. (Having said that, I

12. Cf. 2 Cor 8.8.

14. Rom 13.10.

13. Prv 18.19.

15. Ps 120.2 (119.2 LXX).

do not think there is anything in there that is going to be hard to deal with or any attack that cannot be met.)

But since it has become necessary for me to compose something short in response to him, lest anyone think that the accused has chosen to remain silent, I shall construct as short an *apologia* as may be. If his entire aim is to argue with us about divine mysteries, then he ought, well-trained as he is in the divinely inspired Scriptures, to be making use of them alone and to be constructing his discourse in a way that is appropriate to its sacred subject and not casting antiquated and foul myths into our midst. You see, he has thought to compare my own words to the mythical apple of discord¹⁶—perhaps as a way of promoting his own great wisdom, at which we too are quite bowled over, for it appears that he knows all about this apple of discord and about Paris son of Priam on account of his logical acuity and enormous learning. Let us leave aside such matters for now and get on with the task at hand.

✠ First Anathema

If any do not confess Emmanuel to be truly God and, on this basis, the holy Virgin to be the Mother-of-God (since she bore in the flesh the Word of God made flesh), let them be anathema.

Cyril's Defense

I have loudly shouted down any who would shy away from confessing Emmanuel to be truly God and the holy Virgin to be the Mother-of-God, seeing as, when the Word of God became flesh, that is, a man, she gave birth to him according to flesh. If the one who is making accusations against this orthodox statement really thinks that Emmanuel is not truly God, or if he really thinks that it was not according to flesh that the holy Virgin gave birth to the Word of God when he became flesh, as the Scriptures have it, then why does he not clearly say so? What are you up to, my friend? You are spewing out some horrible

16. See n. 2 on p. 84 above in this chapter.

blasphemies and wantonly opposing orthodox dogma by suggesting that Emmanuel is not truly God nor is the holy Virgin the Mother-of-God.¹⁷

By comparing carefully what the divinely inspired Scriptures say as against the arguments this fellow is ranting about, and by setting against him both the tradition of apostolic and evangelical faith and the confession of the Fathers who once gathered at Nicaea, we have become convinced, not so much that he is dishonestly attacking my own words, but that in so doing he is really launching a shameless attack upon the whole of divine Scripture. But this wise and shrewd interpreter simply passed over what he really ought to have been discussing, thought nothing at all of dealing with these issues first, and instead set out on a quite different path. He turned straightaway to the crucial point, namely, that the Word of God is superior to change and did not alter into the nature of flesh, a point upon which the present anathema is quite firm and the truth of which it is trying to demonstrate.

Well then, let him hear this, since he is totally clueless when he reads these expressions that he opposes: you are totally off the point, my friend, and you are battling against an idea that we, too, find despicable. We know perfectly well that the divine, transcendent nature cannot experience any "shadow of turning,"¹⁸ nor did the Word of God give up being what he is to be transformed into a fleshly nature. Since he points out that God's form took upon himself the form of a servant, let him go on and explain whether it was just these "forms" that came together by themselves, quite apart from their concrete existences. Well, I reckon that even he would shrink from saying that, for it was not mere resemblances and forms, things with no concrete existence, that conjoined together to bring about the saving union;

17. This is clearly meant to be a "quotation" from Theodoret. The latter did not use these words, but in the final paragraph of his critique he acknowledged the use of the terms "Emmanuel" and "Mother-of-God" only in a qualified sense; the implication is that Theodoret would not allow for the plain statements, "Emmanuel is God" and "the Virgin is the Mother-of-God." Hence Cyril is trying to elicit the real essence of Theodoret's position, which he saw as tantamount to Nestorius's explicit rejection of the title "Mother-of-God."

18. Jas 1.17.

rather, it was a convergence of the very things themselves, of two concrete existences. Then we can really have faith that a genuine incarnation took place.

So, if we do say, "The Word became flesh," then we do not mean by this a confusion or a mixing, nor a change or alteration, but rather that, in a way that cannot be fully described, he was united with a holy body that possessed a rational soul. The parts that were united cannot be said to be confused, but rather the one took the other into itself. What we affirm, then, is that the Word of God the Father took upon himself the holy and animate flesh and was truly united to it without confusion, and that he then came forth from the womb as a man, while also remaining truly God. It is on this basis that we call the holy Virgin "Mother-of-God."

Yet I think it is quite excessive to suggest that we should also call her "Mother-of-the-man."¹⁹ Had there been some people foolishly suggesting that the Word's nature was like a source and that he only began to exist as such when he took the flesh, then there might have been some sort of argument that was not especially objectionable in favor of those willing to call her also the "Mother-of-the-man." But since such a premise is wholly detestable to all concerned and nobody would disagree that the holy Virgin should be reckoned as Mother-of-God—so long as one accepts the belief that the Word of God the Father became flesh, that is, a man (after all, as I have said, the Virgin certainly did not bring forth divinity on its own)—then what point is there in insisting that she be called "Mother-of-the-man"? It appears, however, that they actually used this device against Christ, for they do not allow one to state or think that he who is the preexistent Son of God the Father actually united himself in the womb, in these last days of the age, without confusion and without change, to flesh possessed of a rational soul, and that he thereby became one of us; instead, they insist on announcing, and also persuade people to agree, that God indwelt him as he would a saint. They fail to realize that, through the Spirit, the God of the universe is also within each of us, as in holy tem-

19. *Anthrōpotokos*, the term urged by Nestorius as an alternative to "Mother-of-God."

ples, as it says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and God’s Spirit lives in you? So if anyone ruins God’s temple, God will ruin him; for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”²⁰ So if even we ourselves are called temples because God indwells us by his Spirit, then we can be sure that it is otherwise with the mystery of Christ. Now, given that we say that the flesh was genuinely united to God the Word, within whom was a rational soul, I would gladly learn of him whether he argues that the Word was genuinely united to the man, that is, to the rationally ensouled holy body; or whether he accords with others in thinking that it happened by a connection pertaining between a servant-like form without its own concrete existence and a divine form similarly without its own concrete existence; or in yet another way, by means of an ambiguity in the term “son” or by their sharing an equal dignity. It is really questionable whether one should entertain any such notion as “connection” anyway. Seeing as I am in possession of what that man has said and of his transparent confession, I am probably being unnecessarily upset about it and elaborating my defense more than is really necessary, for in his analysis of the first anathema, he says:

This is why we name the child who was born Emmanuel, who is neither God separated from human nature nor a man stripped of divinity.

Of course, he needed to explain this issue in an accurate and neatly-rounded way, but we must point out this one thing: see how, in this quotation, while obviously explaining the union, he says that God is not separated from the human nature, yet he also admits to knowing Christ to be one within the union, that is, that the same individual is at the same time both God and man. Surely he will be embarrassed at our critique?

Second Anathema

If any do not confess that the Word from God the Father was united to flesh at the level of concrete existence, and that Christ is one, together with his own flesh, that is, that the same individual is at the same time both God and man, let them be anathema.

20. 1 Cor 3.16–17.

Theodoret's Critique

Because we are guided by the divine teachings of the apostles, we confess one Christ, and we call the same individual both God and man because they have been united. On the other hand, we do not recognize that the union was "at the level of concrete existence." Such a notion is wholly foreign both to the divine Scriptures and to the Fathers who have interpreted them. And if the author of this expression means by a union "at the level of concrete existence" that there arose a mixture of flesh and divinity, then we shall zealously oppose him and critique such a blasphemy. For confusion necessarily follows mixture, and once confusion has been introduced, then the property of each nature is removed. The elements of a mixture are no longer what they were before. This would be the most horrific of things to say about God the Word and of the one who came from David's seed. Rather, we should be convinced by the Lord when, by commanding the Jews to "destroy this temple and in three days I shall raise it up,"²¹ he implied that there were two natures. If a mixture had arisen, then neither would God have remained God nor would the temple be recognized as a temple. Instead, the temple would have been by nature God and vice versa, since this is entailed by the definition of a mixture. In this case, it would have been superfluous for the Lord to command the Jews to "destroy this temple and in three days I shall raise it up." If some sort of mixture, and hence confusion, had really arisen, then he ought rather to have said, "Destroy me and in three days I shall be raised." But instead he implied that there were both a temple to be destroyed and a God who can raise it up again. Hence this "union at the level of concrete existence," which in my opinion is being offered to us as a cover for the term "mixture," is quite superfluous. It is sufficient to speak of "the union," a term which both implies the properties of the natures and also teaches us to worship a single Christ.

21. Jn 2.19.

Cyril's Defense

See again what a noble chap he is! He takes whatever chance he can to natter on against me, so keen is he to rip apart this expression of mine, "at the level of concrete existence." He condemns it for not being a customary term and asserts that it is a strange, made-up expression. He does not appreciate that the meaning of these words is being deployed to defend the truth against the new-fangled words of profane heretics, and he attempts to do away with what seems to be the opposition.

It is precisely because Nestorius constantly denied that God the Word's birth happened according to flesh, and instead introduced a mere unity of dignities, and it is because he said that a man, honored by sharing the title of Sonship, was connected to God, that we were forced to battle against these notions of his and to assert instead that the union was "at the level of concrete existence," meaning by this simply that the Word's nature, that is, his concrete existence, which is the Word himself, was genuinely united to a human nature, quite apart from any change or confusion, as we have said often enough. He is reckoned to be, and actually is, a single Christ; the same individual is both God and man.

I do think that Theodoret would actually agree on this point, since he says that the god is not separated from human nature nor is the humanity reckoned apart from divinity. We do not agree, however, that the forms, the servant's and God's, were united apart from their concrete existences, nor would we affirm that a regular man was honored by a mere equality of dignities and was contingently connected to the Word. What we do say is that the Only-Begotten Son of God himself took upon himself the flesh possessed of a rational soul that had been united to him and became a man while remaining also God. But this man, who is so smart with his words and has such a keen intelligence, argues that the expression implies mixture, and he even dares to suggest that the integrity of the natures would be damaged by being part of this mixture, as if we did not know this.

See how he goes on and on and loves the sound of his own

words. He reckons he has no equal in speaking at great length, and he accepts something that has never been said before as if it were the truth, such that he seems to be one of those people who do not know how to discern right from wrong, one of whom might make up deceitful stories while another might straightway find the right path and make use of sensible and appropriate expressions. I confess that at first I believed that he understood the meaning of the anathemas and that he was just pretending not to, so as to indulge certain individuals. But I now realize that actually he does not have a clue.

☪️ *Third Anathema*

If any divide the concrete existences of the one Christ after the union, connecting them by a connection that is merely one of dignity, authority, or power, rather than by a convergence at the level of a natural union, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

The meanings of his expressions are totally unclear, even opaque, though for godly people it is clear that they are meaningless, since is there anyone who cannot see that “connection” and “convergence” mean just the same thing? Convergence is something that happens to things that are separate, while connection is something that happens to things that are divided. The extremely cunning author of these expressions has turned synonyms into opposites. He says that we must not speak of a “connection” by which the concrete existences become attached to one another,²² but rather of a “convergence,” and a natural one at that. Either he does not know what he is talking about, or else he is consciously being blasphemous. You see, nature has to do with what is involuntary, what is inevitable; for example, we say that we hunger naturally, meaning that we do not decide to be hungry; it happens inevitably. If they were able to will not to be hungry, then paupers would surely have stopped begging! Being thirsty, sleeping, and breathing the air are all things done

22. Lit.: “connected.”

naturally; as I have said, they are all examples of things that are involuntary. Any who do not feel the need of such things must be at the end of their lives. So if the union of God's form with the form of the servant had been a natural one, then God the Word would have been forced by necessity to be connected to the form of the servant, instead of its being something given out of his love of humanity, and he who gave laws to the whole world would turn out to be the one who is constrained to follow those laws. That is not what the blessed Paul taught us; on the contrary, he said that "he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant."²³ The phrase "he emptied himself" implies that it was done voluntarily. So then, if he was consciously and deliberately united to the human nature that he took, then it is superfluous to add this qualification, "natural," it being quite enough to acknowledge that there was a union, a union moreover that pertains to things previously divided, since without there being some division between things, a union would not be conceivable. So, the supposition of a union presupposes a division. And if so, how can he say that one cannot divide the concrete existences or natures? Especially as he knows full well both that the concrete existence of God the Word was complete even before time began, and that the servant's form he took was also a complete form. This is why he said "concrete existences" and not "concrete existence." Given, then, that the natures, that is, God's form and the servant's form, the one that was taken, are both complete things that nonetheless came together into the same individual, it is reasonable to acknowledge a single person and, of course, a single Son and Christ, while to refer to the "united concrete existences," or natures, is not inappropriate but is actually a necessary consequence. For if in the case of a single human being we divide the natures and call the mortal one "body" and the immortal one "soul," but both together are called "man," it is even more reasonable to recognize the properties of both the natures: that of God, who takes, and that of the man, who is taken. We find even the blessed Paul dividing a single man into two when he said somewhere, "As much as our external self wastes away, so much is our internal self re-

23. Phil 2.7.

newed";²⁴ then elsewhere, "It is in the inner self that I rejoice in God's law";²⁵ and again, "that Christ may dwell in the inner self."²⁶ Hence, if even the Apostle divides the natural connection between natures that exist contemporaneously, how can this man, whose doctrine is really one of mixture (though without using that term) indict us of impiety for dividing the properties of the two natures, namely, the nature of the eternal God and the nature of the man who was taken up in these last days?

Cyril's Defense

This man who seems to know everything considers first of all that the obscurity of what I say is deceitful, and also that this perfectly clear and well-known term (at least it is to anyone who cares to think straight) is totally opaque. He is the one whose mind's eye is darkened. He thought that the argument we proffered demanded that one use the term "convergence" and not the term "connection," and then, as a way of demonstrating his inner deviousness, he makes out that the meaning is the same whether one uses the term "connection" or the term "convergence." I was quite surprised that he showed such poor judgment in this matter, for apparently *he* is the only one who knows what absolutely everybody knows, something so clichéd that it is blatantly obvious to anyone who tries to avoid worldly thinking, rhetorical word games, or science based on vague hearsay. It is because I am so in awe of his wide learning, that I say this: you, with your mouth gaping so widely against us, wake up a bit from your drunken sleep, and look more minutely into the mystery. There are some who slander this so-called union that concerns Christ, and in opposition to what it says in Holy Scripture they twist it into something perverted, whatever they happen to feel like. For example, they say that the natures are totally divided from one another, that they are separate in every way, and that each has its own separate existence; they hold that the man was contingently connected to God merely at the level of dignity or authority, and because the word "son" can be predicated of

24. 2 Cor 4.16.

25. Rom 7.22.

26. Eph 3.16-17.

both of them.²⁷ The anathema does away with this doctrine and takes a stand against such nauseating and meaningless stuff. We maintain that the Word was naturally, that is, genuinely, not contingently, united to the holy flesh, which possessed a rational soul. We do not need to split it up in any way, lest we end up thinking of two sons because we have divided the indivisible. But he fails to comprehend what this “natural union” means, namely, that it is genuine, one that neither confuses nor mixes the natures together such that each would need to be in a different state from what it actually is. He uses a juvenile and silly explanation as proof of what he reckons to be right and says,

If the union was a natural one, then the Word’s self-emptying was not something voluntary, but such as would arise from necessity and constraint, since nature has to do with what is involuntary.

Against this, one might reply to him that, yes, as you say, hunger, thirst, etc., are natural infirmities of the flesh and affect us because we have natures that are subject to the affections, but the Word’s divine and ineffable nature admits neither of affection nor of necessity and is in no way constrained such that it would be required, against its will, to become flesh, that is, to make a limited humanity its own and take upon itself Abraham’s seed.²⁸

It is easy for anyone who wants to, to see that this argument is totally futile. He states that things that are natural are in every way subject to the laws of necessity, adducing as proof of this the fact that we experience hunger and thirst involuntarily, since nature calls even when we do not want it to. But a learned man, one who has a mind sharply attuned towards such matters, ought to see that there are other issues here that should rightly be taken more into account. After all, is it not true that man is naturally rational? Is the rational involuntary and constrained? What next? Tell me also, whether the God of the universe is not naturally God? Is he not naturally holy, just, good, life, light, wisdom, and power? Is he what he is against his will, by necessity,

27. Cyril uses the term “homonymy” in the Aristotelian sense, drawn from the opening chapter of the *Categories*.

28. Cf. Heb 2.16.

as it were? To think along such lines is the very limit of madness and would, I reckon, be worthy of a transparent rebuttal. Why does he try to turn his deceit into some sort of unassailable bastion and grasp at such a feeble defense? Then, when he hears us say that the union is natural, that is, that it is genuine and free from change and that the convergence of the concrete existences is altogether unconfused, he tries to twist the meaning of what I say so that it would seem to have been wrongly expressed. The brazen man is not afraid to make the Word's nature submit to inescapable necessity and thereby make him like us. It was not an involuntary act when he emptied himself. The Only-Begotten voluntarily became a man; it was not as you say, that he took a man to himself, bestowing this connection upon himself contingently and crowning himself with the grace that sonship entails, as could happen in the case of a human being. The result is that we believe the concrete existences to have been united and the Word to have become man and incarnate, and hence we appropriately refer to the union as "natural." It is a doctrine of the union that excludes its being counterfeit or contingent (and it is something we possess by faith and sanctification, because we have become partakers of the divine nature, as Paul says, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"),²⁹ and which does not subject the Word of God, who is free and without affection, to constraints and natural desires. It seems to me that one cannot reproach or upbraid this desire not to separate after the union what has been joined or to push them apart from each other, especially when that lovely chap Theodoret takes as an example a human being, which in our view would be a single entity, and does not allow him to be split up, albeit he does admit that there is some such split or separation in our perception of a human being—I mean to the extent that one knows that the soul and the flesh are in their own natures quite different things. If we now take this latter point into account in considering the mode of the union that occurred in Christ, then we would conclude that, as an object of our intellection, there was a genuine convergence between divinity and humanity into a union, although we know full well that the Word of

29. 1 Cor 6.17.

God in his own nature is something quite different from the flesh while the latter is also a different entity in *its* own nature. Once they have been united, though, it is dangerous to split them up again, while orthodox logic, as the holy and divinely inspired Scriptures teach us, does not allow anyone to partition the one Christ, Son, and Lord into two Sons. *His* treatment, however, of these questions of true doctrine is altogether superficial. In fact, he spurns any knowledge that would be vital for him to do this to advantage, as if this were something harmful. Instead, he appears to glory in his deceit even when he is made well aware of his slanders; let him hear what we have to say: "Why do you, strong man, boast of wrongdoing in your evil? All day your tongue has plotted unrighteousness."³⁰

☪️ *Fourth Anathema*

If any allocate the sayings in the evangelical and apostolic writings to two persons, or concrete existences, whether those spoken by the saints about Christ or those he used about himself, and then attribute some of them to a man who is thought of separately from the Word of God, and others only to the Word of God because they are more appropriate to God, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Refutation

This statement is similar to the previous ones. Given that there has been a mixture, he proposes that there is no distinction to be made among the sayings in the holy Gospels or in the apostolic writings, and he boasts that he can still meanwhile resist Arianism, Eunomianism, and other such heresies.³¹ So let this great teacher of theology explain how he would refute these heretics' blasphemies by attributing the more inferior sayings, those more appropriately spoken by the form of the servant, to God the Word. Those heretics make out that God the

30. Ps 52.1–2 (51.3–4 LXX).

31. For the significance of this accusation for Cyril's future and his experience at the Council of Ephesus, see Introduction, pp. 19–20.

Word is a lesser entity, a creature and servant, and they teach that the Son of God came into existence from non-existence. So as for us who hold the opposite position, who confess the Son to be consubstantial and co-eternal with God the Father, who say that the Son is the Maker of all, the one who creates, orders, governs, rules, who is all-wise and all-powerful (more, that he is power itself, life itself, wisdom itself), to whom should we attribute the saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" or, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me," or, "Father, save me from this hour," or, "No one knows that hour, not even the Son of Man,"³² and all other such humble sayings that he himself uttered, or that the holy apostles said or wrote about him? To whom should we attribute the hunger and the thirst, the tiredness and the sleep, the ignorance and the fear? Who was it who needed the help of angels? If the answer is God the Word, then how could it be that Wisdom was ignorant? And could someone afflicted by ignorance be called "Wisdom"? If he did not have the Father's knowledge, how could he have been speaking the truth when he said that he himself had everything the Father had?³³ After all, he said, "Only the Father knows that day."³⁴ How could he be the perfect image of his Begetter without possessing all that belonged to the Begetter? If someone admits to being ignorant, and they are being truthful, that would be generally accepted, but if someone knows the day but desires to conceal it, and for that reason pretends ignorance, then the result is quite some blasphemy indeed! Either the truth is lying, or else it cannot really be called the truth because it contains something of the opposite. Yet if the truth does not lie, then God the Word knew full well about that day which in fact he himself created and which he himself appointed as the day on which he intends to judge the world. Since he is the Father's perfect image, he has the Father's knowledge. Hence it was not God the Word who was lacking in this knowledge; it was the form of the servant, which at that exact time knew only as much as the indwelling Godhead had revealed to him. The same can

32. Mt 27.46; Mt 26.39; Jn 12.27; Mt 24.36.

33. Cf. Jn 16.15.

34. Mt 24.36.

be said also about other similar passages. Otherwise, how could God the Word reasonably say to the Father, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as you will"?³⁵ Again, all sorts of absurd consequences follow, such as that the Father and the Son are not of one mind—the Father wants one thing, the Son another, as he says, "nevertheless, not as I will but as you will." We note that yet again the Son turns out to be very ignorant since he does not know whether or not the cup will pass from him. But surely to say such a thing about God the Word is extremely blasphemous. He who came for this very purpose, who willingly took up into himself our nature and emptied himself, he knew precisely what the end result of the mysterious plan of salvation was. This is why he could predict to the holy apostles what would happen: "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be given into the clutches of the Gentiles for them to mock him, flog him, and crucify him; on the third day he will rise again."³⁶ So, how can he pray against all this happening when he knew the whole future and had predicted it and even rebuked Peter for praying that it would not happen? It is totally absurd for Abraham to have seen his day long ago and to have rejoiced,³⁷ and for Isaiah similarly to have prophesied about his saving passion (not to mention Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and the whole gamut of the prophets), while all the time he is ignorant, pleads for an escape, and prays that what was going to happen for the sake of world salvation would not come to pass. Surely, then, it was not God the Word who said these things; it was the form of the servant, fearful of a death that had not yet been destroyed. God the Word permitted it to say such things, granting an opportunity for it to show fear so as to reveal clearly the nature of the element that had been received and so that we would not take him who was from Abraham and David for an appearance or fantasy. This docetic blasphemy arose precisely because that irreligious, heretical lot chased after such ideas. To conclude, then, we shall attribute to God the Word everything that was said or done in a manner worthy of God, while whatever was

35. Mt 26.39.

37. Cf. Jn 8.56.

36. Cf. Mt 20.18–19.

said or done in a more inferior manner we shall assign to the form of the servant. This way we avoid being infected with the blasphemies of Arianism and Eunomianism.

Cyril's Defense

Would it not be so much better, my esteemed colleague, to launch this inquiry into the meanings of these terms without prejudice or an antagonistic attitude? But he does not do this at all; instead, he keeps coming back to what he feels like, and says:

This statement is similar to the previous ones. Given that there has been a mixture, he proposes that there is no distinction to be made among the sayings in the holy Gospels or in the apostolic writings, and he boasts that he can still meanwhile resist Arianism, Eunomianism, and other such heresies.

That is what *he* says, but in fact I am as far from suggesting that the natures are mixed with one another or that they undergo combination, confusion, or change, as he is from getting anything right at all! Moreover, we never denied that a distinction does need to be made between different sayings; we are aware that some of them are more appropriate to the divine, others to the human; the former belong to transcendent glory, while the latter fit better with the limitations of his emptying of himself. What we are saying is that there is absolutely no need to distribute them between two persons that are in any way at all separated from each other. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is one, and one the faith we have in him, and one the baptism, then one also surely is his person; that is, it is of a single individual. If the same individual is at the same time both God and man, then there can be no risk in making the sayings, both those appropriate to divinity and especially those appropriate to humanity, equally applicable to that individual. His deity and ineffable nature is in no way impoverished in comparison with the Father's transcendence just because he says something that is typically human; and neither is our faith in the saving effects of the Incarnation removed when it is proclaimed that along with being God he has also become a man like us. So whether a saying is appro-

priate to the divinity or is something human, in both cases it belongs to the single Christ. If the Word of God the Father did not become a man, then do not let him talk as one of us. But if it is true that he “partook of blood and flesh alongside us” and “became like his brothers” (meaning us) “in every way,”³⁸ then why is it that they so mindlessly ridicule the wonderfully conceived plan of salvation by not making any allowance for things said on the human level or for that lowliness of speech which is entailed by the means of salvation, just because, as they readily admit, they are desperate to keep the Son on his own, separate from the form of the servant? It is quite mad to pretend to be afraid of the perversions of heretics and then to end up removing the orthodox tradition right out of its proper definition. It would be better, and certainly more intelligible, to say that the human sayings are not to be attributed to a different person (or rather, a son conceived of separately and on his own account), to the form of the servant, as they would usually have it, but instead to attribute them to his human limitations. For it was inevitable, if he was at the same time both God and man, that he would make use of both types of sayings. What amazes me is how hypocritical he can be in confessing that Christ is one, that is, that the same individual is at the same time both God and man, and then divide the one into two, as if he had drifted off into forgetting what he had previously taken to be correct. For he quotes the Savior’s saying, “Nobody knows about that day or that hour, not even the heavenly angels, nor the Son, but only the Father,”³⁹ and then, while affirming that the Word begotten of God the Father is Wisdom itself and knows the whole future, he goes on to say,

[I]t was not God the Word who was lacking in this knowledge; it was the form of the servant, which at that exact time knew only as much as the indwelling Godhead had revealed to him. The same can be said also about the other similar passages.

So if you are not lying when you call Jesus one Christ and Lord and say that the same individual is at the same time both

38. Heb 2.14, 17.

39. Mt 24.36.

God and man, why do you then divide him, and why are you not embarrassed to mention two sons? If the one who is omniscient is not identical with the one who has limited knowledge—the one perfect in wisdom, who knows all that the Father knows, not identical with the one who receives only a partial revelation—then certainly there would indeed be two subjects. And if because of the fact of there being a genuine union he is actually one and the same individual, not two separate things, each on its own, then knowing and also not knowing can both be reasonably predicated of him. He has divine knowledge because he is the Father's wisdom, but since for salvation's sake he has subjected himself to the boundaries of human knowledge, then this boundary he has made his very own along with the other characteristics, even though, as I just mentioned, there is nothing he does not know—in fact, he has complete knowledge like the Father. What is the reason, then, that one may say that he was hungry or that he was travel-weary,⁴⁰ even though he is Life and, as God, the Giver of life, and also the living Bread come down from heaven who gives life to the world,⁴¹ and who is himself likened to the Lord of powers?⁴² Well, so that we might believe that he really did become a man, he made the human characteristics his very own, albeit continuing to enjoy the full possession of his own nature's virtues, retaining without confusion the state in which he was, is, and ever shall be. Arguing that God indwelt the form of the servant and granted him a revelation, and that a partial one, suggests to us that Emmanuel is merely a prophet and a god-bearing man, and nothing else. He reckons that to be sensible and uncontroversial. If (following his argument) it was the Word of God who cried, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me,"⁴³ then in the first place he is not of one mind with the Father, and, further, he is wrong to pray against drinking the cup, even though he knows full well that his Passion is going to be for the world's salvation. He infers, then, that these sayings were not made by God the Word. Therefore, anyone who goes along with such spurious arguments will get some come-back from us. Since you think that such sayings ought to come

40. Jn 4.6.

42. Cf. Ps 24(23):10.

41. Jn 6.51, 33.

43. Mt 26.39.

nowhere near God the Word and that they should be attributed only to the form of the servant, are you not thereby dividing the one back again into two sons? So much is obvious to anyone with half a mind! After all, even someone who follows your line of reasoning, my friend, would agree that there is absolutely no way that the form of the servant would pray against the Passion or would appear to have a different intention from the Father and even from the indwelling Logos himself. Surely, I might suggest, he knew that the Passion was going to bring salvation to everything under heaven and give life to those defeated by death. He then goes on to say that he had to be seen to be above cowardice and always to be following divine prompting. Do you not realize that you are nattering on pointlessly? What a pile of disgusting garbage these ideas of yours are! Without a moment's hesitation I would say that all human characteristics are of little worth next to the Word that was begotten of God. Moreover, I will ask him, to whom do you think the self-emptying happened, and who would be the one who willingly underwent it? If you reply, as some do, that it was the form of the servant, namely, David's seed, then how could that possibly be emptied, if he was taken up by God? And if you say that it was the very Word himself, who is formally equal to God the Father, who emptied himself, then again how could he possibly be emptied if he avoided the self-emptying? No, for God the Word, who has no knowledge or experience of change, to empty himself means precisely to do and to say something characteristically human, on account of his saving convergence with flesh. Of course, even though he became a man, the logic of this mysterious process absolutely does not imply that any damage would have been done to his own nature. He both remained what he was and also came down into humanity for the salvation and life of the world. That is why we attribute his sayings, both those in the Gospels and those in the writings of the holy apostles, not to two persons but to a single Christ, Son, and God. Neither do we allow his human characteristics to belittle his divine nature and glory, nor do we disown the plan of salvation. Rather, we believe that the Incarnation that was for our sakes is to be predicated of the Word himself.

✠ Fifth Anathema

If any dare to say that Christ is a god-bearing man and not rather that he is truly God because he is by nature the one natural Son, insofar as the Word became flesh and “partook like us of blood and flesh,”⁴⁴ let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

We agree that, insofar as he was united to blood, flesh, and immortal soul, God the Word partook of such things just as we do. At the same time, though, we wholly deny that he was made flesh by any sort of change and even charge with profanity anyone who says so. In fact, this turns out to be the very opposite to what the verse actually means. For if the Word was changed into flesh, then he cannot have partaken with us of flesh and blood, while if he partook of flesh and blood, then he did so because he was something different from flesh and blood. Hence, if the flesh is something different from him, then he cannot himself have changed into flesh. This is why, by using the expression “partaking,” we worship as a single Son both him who took and that which was taken, and at the same time acknowledge that their natures are different. And no, we do not reject the term “god-bearing man” since it may be found in many of the holy Fathers, including Basil the Great, who uses this term as a name in his *To Amphilochius, On the Holy Spirit*, and also in his exegesis of Psalm 59.⁴⁵ It is not because he was only partially in receipt of divine grace that we bestow this title upon him, but because he possessed the entire united deity of the Son. For this is how the blessed Paul interpreted it: “Take care that no one snare you

44. Heb 2.14.

45. *On the Holy Spirit* 5.12; also at *Homilies on the Psalms* 59.58 (PG 29:468B), an important citation for Theodoret in the florilegium he included in his *Eranistes*. In both cases (and in the small number of other occurrences in Basil) the term actually is predicated of “flesh” rather than of “man.” The term “god-bearing man” was often used of prophets and saints (e.g., in Chrysostom’s eulogy of Ignatius); hence Cyril’s understandable reticence to use it of God the Word.

with philosophy and empty deceit, which comes from human tradition and is based on the elements of this world rather than on Christ, because the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily in him.”⁴⁶

Cyril's Defense

Yet again it is easy to prove that he is spouting garbage. What I am asserting is that it is inappropriate for anyone to call Christ a god-bearing man, the aim being to ensure that he is reckoned to be God genuinely made man, the Word of God incarnate, not just like some saint. But yet again this fellow is launching his attack against perfectly orthodox statements and indulging in all sorts of extraordinary deceptions. For instance, he says that my argument is that the Word of God was transformed into the flesh's nature, and so he goes digging round for arguments to prove how the Word of God could never be changeable. So I have to say yet again what I have already said so often, namely, that since no one is suggesting that the Word's divine and pure nature was transformed into earthly flesh, and everyone agrees that his nature is unchangeable, it is a total waste of effort to feel obliged to deal with such fraudulent claims that arise from nothing, because God the Word is naturally unchangeable and unalterable. After all, who would be so utterly senseless as willfully to think or say such shocking things that even the most mindless idiot would throw out with the trash? I am quite taken aback that there is such a person who attributes to the Emmanuel the limitations of being a prophet, even when it is universally agreed by everyone that Emmanuel is God. He actually calls him a god-bearing man, in which case he would seem to be just like us insofar as, by means of the Holy Spirit, we have the God of the universe dwelling within us; he lives in our hearts, and “we are temples of the living God.”⁴⁷ To think that God lived in a man is not the same thing as to say that the Word became a man. If what the blessed Paul said is true, that the whole fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in him bodily (that

⁴⁶ Col 2.8–9.

⁴⁷ Cf. 1 Cor 3.16–17; 2 Cor 6.16.

is, not contingently),⁴⁸ then he is telling us that God the Father is one, and that the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, is also one. One might say that a man's spirit lives within him (and that is why Scripture says that "as for those who dwell in houses of clay, among whom we also are formed of the same clay"),⁴⁹ but a man is nonetheless reckoned to be single, and indeed is really so because he is a composition of his flesh and the rational soul that dwells within him. So why can he not stop muddling up my straightforward and accurate explanation of the doctrine? One moment he is saying there is a single Christ, Son, and Lord, the same individual who is at once both God and man; then at another he surrenders him to the limitations of the prophets by calling him a god-bearing man. Is he so unaware that, if he is a temple indwelt by the Word just as we are, rather than genuinely being God, then that makes him basically equivalent to us? Yet that is not how the divinely inspired Scriptures have it ("the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us").⁵⁰ It was said this way precisely so that no one might think that he had been transformed into the nature of flesh by any sort of change. The one who became flesh, that is, man, is not a god-bearing man. He is God. He descended willingly into his state of self-emptying and made the flesh from a woman his very own, flesh that has both soul and mind. Remember that he calls his own body a temple,⁵¹ though this indwelling was not contingent as it is when the Spirit indwells us. Rather, because they have been united, he is reckoned as a single Christ, Son, and Lord.

Sixth Anathema

If any say that the Word of God the Father is the God or Lord of Christ, and do not instead acknowledge that the same individual is at the same time both God and man, since the Scriptures say that the Word became flesh, let them be anathema.

48. Cf. Col 1.19; 2.9.

50. Jn 1.14.

49. Jb 4.19.

51. Cf. Jn 2.19.

Theodoret's Critique

The blessed Paul names what was taken up by God the Word as the "form of a servant."⁵² Since, however, this "taking-up" happened before the union and since the blessed Paul was discussing the "taking-up" when he called the nature that was taken the "form of a servant," then the reference to a "servant" no longer applies after the union has occurred. If he was writing to people who believed in Christ when the Apostle said, "so you are no longer a servant but a son,"⁵³ and if the Lord said to his disciples, "I shall no longer call you servants but friends,"⁵⁴ then how much more is he who is the first-fruits of our nature, he by whom we were made worthy of the grace of adoption, made free from the name of "servant." So we agree that even the "form of the servant" is God because God's form was united with it, and we have no problem with the prophet calling even the infant Emmanuel and naming the child who was born a "messenger of great counsel," and a "wonderful counsellor, mighty and powerful God, Prince of peace, and Father of eternity."⁵⁵ Even so, even after the union the very same prophet proclaimed the nature of what was taken and called the one from Abraham's seed a "servant," as in these sayings: "You are my servant, Israel, and in you shall I be glorified," and, "Thus says the Lord, who formed me from the womb as his servant," and a little later, "Behold, I have given you as a covenant for nations, for a light to Gentiles, that you may be a salvation right to the end of the earth."⁵⁶ So what was formed in the womb was not God the Word but the form of the servant, since God the Word did not become flesh by being changed. He took up to himself flesh possessing a rational soul.

52. Phil 2.7.

53. Gal 4.7.

54. Jn 15.15.

55. Is 7.14; 9.6. The latter of these verses was known to Theodoret according to the Lucianic recension, in which the Hebrew names had been restored to a much truncated LXX text. Theodoret discusses these issues in his commentary on Isaiah, written within a few years of this controversy, where it is used to similar purpose; see *Commentaire sur Isaïe*, ed. J.-N. Guinot, Sources chrétiennes 276, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 326–27.

56. Is 49.3–6.

Cyril's Defense

The mystery of salvation brought about by the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten easily proves that the formula that we constructed, and that he is now defending just as much, was entirely appropriate. For he who exists in the form of God the Father is the Only-Begotten Son. He is on a par with his Father in every possible way. He shares the same glory and freedom, and yet he took upon himself the form of a servant and was called a brother to those who are under the yoke of slavery, namely, us.⁵⁷ Moreover, although he was the Lawmaker insofar as he was God, he paid his tax to the tax-collectors like one of us and became like a man under the law; yet he taught his disciples that actually he was the Son, and that, as a result of his Incarnation, he was in the form of a servant, while in his own nature he remained free since he was from God, and was God. He bore with the tax-gatherers only because, by possessing the form of the servant as his very own, his self-emptying had limited that freedom. One ought not, as a result, to be offended if someone calls him a "servant" after the usage of the holy prophets, since they were aware, because the Holy Spirit revealed it to them, both that, once the Word of God the Father had become a man, he would be free insofar as he is the Son, but also that, by sharing a form with us who are under the yoke of slavery, his limitations (which were all part of the grand design of his self-emptying) would not put him in contempt. That is why he can say that God is his Father, even though he is God by nature and came out of him, and even though his transcendence is in no way less than his Father's. Now, Nestorius wrote of Christ as follows: "that he who suffers is a merciful high priest, not the life-giving God of him who suffered," and he also calls the Word of God "the God of Christ"; and even though he adds that "the child and the child's master are one and the same," we still insist that these expressions of his are not only misplaced but positively blasphemous. For if the Word of God the Father is "the God of Christ," there would clearly and indisputably be two individuals; so how could the child and the child's master then be reckoned to be one and the same? If it is the case that the

57. Cf. Gal 5.1.

same individual is at the same time both God and man, because the Word of God has been made man and incarnate, then you could not say that Emmanuel was the God and master of himself. How could anyone possibly think that way, when we all know that divinity, within the context of its own nature, is something quite different from humanity in the context of *its* own nature? Christ, though, is one individual comprised from both divinity and humanity, and this in the context of the union that brings salvation.

✠ *Seventh Anathema*

If any say that Jesus's actions were carried out by God the Word as a man's would be,⁵⁸ and that he was endowed with the glory of the Only-Begotten as if he were another individual with a separate existence, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

If it is human nature to be mortal, while God the Word is Life and the Life-giver, who raised up the temple that had been destroyed by the Jews and took it up to heaven, then surely the form of the servant has been glorified through the form of God. If the form of the servant started by being naturally mortal and then became immortal by being united to God the Word, then it received what it did not have; it is because it took what it did not have and was thus glorified that the form of the servant has been glorified by the Giver. That is why the Apostle exclaims, "according to the working of his mighty power which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead."⁵⁹

Cyril's Defense

Those who refer to Christ as the Word of God rather than as a man just like us are demonstrating thereby, to anyone who

58. *Energeō*: This verb is used by Cyril both directly of Jesus and of his activities. A more accurate translation of the anathema might be, "if anyone says that Jesus was controlled by God the Word," but the English "carried out" allows the term to be translated the same way throughout this passage, which is preferable.

59. Eph 1.19–20.

will listen, that he was made man and incarnate. Hence, even if anything that is especially appropriate to the divinity were said to have been carried out through his body, which was thereby fulfilling the function of an instrument in his hands, it would be no less the case that the one carrying out the action was the Lord of powers, who was not granting that power of control to someone else in the way that he granted authority to the blessed apostles over "unclean spirits, to cast them out and heal every disease and every deformity among the people."⁶⁰ The divinely inspired Paul also says, "I will not dare to talk about anything but what Christ has carried out through me, by both word and deed, through signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit."⁶¹ The blessed disciples rejoiced and later approached Christ and said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us in your name."⁶² For we argue that, through the Spirit, Christ carried out the actions of the saints, who were separate individuals, but we do not think that the Word carried out the actions of Jesus through the Spirit in this way, as if he were a separate son beside God's Only-Begotten. The notion of the union implies singularity, and hence we take care not to make a division into two. Even when the Scriptures say that the Word became flesh, he is also the Only-Begotten Son because there was a genuine, albeit impossible to express or understand, union between them. That is precisely why we argue that the one and only Christ Jesus carried out the miracles using his very own body as an instrument and that this did not happen in the same way as in the case of the saints; such a parallel would be wholly profane and unacceptable. If, however, it was his very own body that he raised from the dead (because he is both Life and the Life-giver), then he would seem to be glorifying himself and showing how his own nature is life-giving rather than granting some other individual his own glory. Admittedly, even though he is God, comes naturally out of God, and is Lord of glory, he did say to God the Father in heaven, "Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world existed,"⁶³ in which case how can it be that he asks for the glory he had before the world began as if he

60. Mt 10.1.

62. Lk 10.17.

61. Rom 15.18-19.

63. Jn 17.5.

now lacked it? For since he became a man and by God's grace tasted death in his own flesh for everyone, as the blessed Paul says,⁶⁴ he avoided the ignominy of lacking glory by predicting his own resurrection, by which he would be recognized as both Life and Life-giver (because he is God), and thus would cause us to believe in him. He therefore glorified not some other individual but himself and demonstrated that the temple that had genuinely been united to him was above death. After all, we have said again and again that we believe that the body united to him was possessed of both soul and mind.

✠ Eighth Anathema

If any dare to say that the man who was taken up should be worshiped, glorified, and named together with God the Word, as if they were two separate individuals (for the addition of the term "together with" would always entail this understanding), rather than honoring Emmanuel with a single act of worship and ascribing to him a single act of praise, seeing that the Word became flesh, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

As I have said often enough, we offer a single act of praise to our master Christ, and we acknowledge that the same individual is at the same time both God and man, since the definition of union requires this. But this does not mean that we have to avoid talking about the special properties of each of the natures. God the Word did not undergo any change into flesh, nor did the man cease to be what he was and transform into the nature of God. Hence we still refer to the properties of each nature even while we are worshiping Christ our Master.

Cyril's Defense

But then we, my dear friend, are used to having far better and more accurate explanations. We follow more detailed lines

64. Cf. Heb 2.9.

of reasoning in trying to unpack the mystery and gain an insight into it that is both precise and is also in line with the teachings of Holy Scripture and the reasoning of the holy Fathers. Hence we deny that God the Word took up for himself a man or connected himself with a man in some contingent fashion as if purely external. We specify that he became a man, and for this very reason we assert that anyone who dares suggest that we need to speak of a man being “taken up” or that we should worship him together with the Son of God, as if they were separate individuals, has departed from orthodox doctrine. For if the same individual is at the same time both God and man, then he is to be worshiped as one individual with a single act of worship, not worshiped “together with” God, or named “together with” God. Otherwise, we might be led to believe in Emmanuel as just a man like one of us who shares in the divine glory, only by grace. No, he is to be acknowledged as God, made flesh for our sakes, that is, genuinely made man, not because his nature was transformed by any sort of change, but because that was the plan of salvation achieved by the union.

Ninth Anathema

If any suggest that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit by making use of a power that came through the Spirit, a power that was something other than his own, and that he received from the Spirit the ability to overcome evil spirits and perform divine miracles for people, instead of saying that the Spirit by which he wrought the miracles was his very own, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

On this occasion he has dared openly to anathematize not just godly people in the present day, but also those who proclaimed the truth in former ages, and even the authors of the divine Gospels, the band of holy apostles, and above all the archangel Gabriel himself. For he was the very first who, even before the conception, proclaimed that Christ would be born

in the flesh from the Holy Spirit, and said the same to Joseph after the conception. To Mary, when she asked, "How can this happen to me, since I have not known a man?" he replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for this reason what is born is holy and shall be called Son of God."⁶⁵ He also said to Joseph, "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for what she is bearing is from the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶ The evangelist also comments, "When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit."⁶⁷ Even the Lord himself, upon entering the synagogue of the Jews and taking up the prophet Isaiah, read the passage that says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," etc., and then added, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."⁶⁸ The blessed Peter discussed the same topic with the Jews: "Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit."⁶⁹ Isaiah had predicted these very events many generations earlier: "A rod will come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a flower shall emerge from the root, and God's Spirit shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of strength, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness; he shall be filled with a spirit that fears God."⁷⁰ And also, "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul has rejoiced. I shall set my spirit upon him; he shall bring judgment upon the Gentiles."⁷¹ The evangelist also cited this testimony in his own accounts,⁷² and even the Lord himself declared to the Jews in the Gospels, "If it is by God's Spirit that I cast out the demons, then God's kingdom has surely come upon you."⁷³ John, too, said that "he who sent me to baptize with water told me himself, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting, he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"⁷⁴

65. Lk 1.34-35.

66. Mt 1.20.

67. Mt 1.18.

68. Lk 4.16-21.

69. Acts 10.38.

70. Is 11.1-2. In his commentary on Isaiah, Theodoret again uses this verse to underline the fleshly ancestry of the Messiah.

71. Is 42.1.

72. Mt 3.17.

73. Mt 12.28.

74. Jn 1.33.

So, then, this exacting auditor of godly doctrine has anathematized not merely prophets and apostles, nor even just the archangel Gabriel, but has extended the blasphemy even to the Savior of all himself. After all, we have already shown that it was the Lord himself who read the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," and then said to the Jews, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears," and who also said to those who charged him with casting out demons by Beelzebub that he was in fact casting them out by God's Spirit. Nonetheless, we deny that he who was formed by the Holy Spirit and anointed by it was himself God the Word, who is co-essential and co-eternal with the Spirit. Rather, it was the human nature that was taken up by the Word in these latter days. We would agree with him that the Spirit is the Son's own, and would accept his formula as a godly one, so long as he also says that the Spirit is of one nature with the Son and proceeds from the Father. But if he is suggesting that the Spirit derives his existence from or through the Son, such a doctrine we would reject as entirely blasphemous. For we believe the Lord when he speaks of "the Spirit which proceeds from the Father"⁷⁵ and similarly the most divine Paul when he says that "we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of the Father."⁷⁶

Cyril's Defense

I explained beforehand that the meaning of the anathemas is directed specifically against Nestorius's stuttering and careless explanations. When he referred to the Holy Spirit as "this thing which bestowed such a great glory upon Christ, which caused the demons to fear him and which granted him to be taken up into heaven," and spouted such garbage as if Christ were a person just like the rest of us, the anathema became absolutely necessary, not to exclude people who say that Jesus, namely, God the Word made man, was glorified by the Holy Spirit, but in opposition to those who openly claim that he made use of a power

⁷⁵. Jn 15.26.

⁷⁶. 1 Cor 2.12.

that came through the Spirit and was something other than his own. After all, remember how he said quite clearly about the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify me,"⁷⁷ and by this we know that it was because the Holy Spirit was at work within him that he could shatter evil, unclean powers; what we deny is that he made use of a power that he had through the Spirit as something that did not belong to him, just as a saint would do. No, the Spirit was and is his own, just as he in turn belongs to the Father. This is what the god-inspired Paul makes abundantly clear to us when he wrote, "Those who are in the flesh are not able to please God; but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not possess the Spirit of Christ, then he does not belong to him."⁷⁸ As our Savior said, the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and is not foreign to the Son, since everything is with the Father. He also taught about the Holy Spirit, "All that the Father possesses is mine; because of this I said to you that he would take from me and make it known to you."⁷⁹ The Holy Spirit, then, glorified Jesus by enacting miracles, but he did so as his own Spirit, not as some power over and above him, seeing as he is reckoned to be God.

So, then, we have not said anything offensive to angels or prophets, as this man has dared to suggest—he seems to know only how to accuse other people. Since, however, his aim (and that of his accomplices) is to divide the single Christ into two, one who is glorified and controlled, and another who does the glorifying and the controlling, they foolishly mock every godly argument that would keep them safe from such a heretical position. Moreover, this censorious individual makes a further point about the blessed Gabriel: "For he was the very first who, even before the conception, proclaimed that Christ would be born in the flesh from the Holy Spirit." This would mean, then, that there is one Christ who is in the flesh and another one who is the Word of God the Father. Where is the union in all this? What benefit could there be if we think of, or speak of, two separate individual Christs? So, if they are going to construct a

77. Jn 16.14.

79. Jn 16.15.

78. Rom 8.8.-9.

mask for themselves and talk about a single Christ while in fact they are thinking of two, then let them listen to what we have to say: “How long will you waver between two poles?”⁸⁰ It would be better to walk in a straight line and hold on to an inviolable, well-grounded faith rather than to limp along with such foolish notions as these.

✠ Tenth Anathema

Divine Scripture says that Christ became “the high priest and apostle of our confession”⁸¹ and that he “offered himself for us as a sweet-smelling savor to God the Father.”⁸² Therefore, if any say that it was not the Word of God himself who became our high priest and apostle when he became incarnate and a man like us, but another, separate individual besides him, one born from a woman, or if any say that he brought this offering on his own behalf rather than just on our behalf (for the one who knew no sin was not in need of any offering), let them be anathema.

Theodoret’s Critique

The unchangeable nature did not change into a nature of flesh. It took human nature into itself and appointed it above the level of normal high priests. This is what the blessed Paul meant when he said that “every high priest is taken from among the people and is appointed to deal with matters relating to God on the people’s behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray because he is himself subject to weakness. This is why he needs to make an offering for his own sins as well as for the people’s.”⁸³ He explains this a little further on when he says, “As

80. 1 Kgs 18.21. The Hebrew verse literally reads, “How long will you limp on two crutches?” metaphorically to mean “waver between two opinions/options.” The LXX translates literally, but the metaphorical intention seems to have been well understood by exegetes, and Cyril uses the verse appropriately here to confront Theodoret with making a clear choice between orthodoxy and heresy.

81. Heb 3.1.

82. Eph 5.2.

83. Heb 5.1–3.

was Aaron, so was Christ."⁸⁴ So as to prove that the nature that was taken up was a weak one, he says, "During the time of his Incarnation, Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his godliness. Even though he was the Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and, after he had been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him because he was nominated by God as a high priest in the order of Melchizedek."⁸⁵

Given all this, who is this person who was made perfect by virtuous deeds rather than being so naturally? Who is this person who learned obedience through his trials without knowing anything about it before those trials? And who is this person who lived a godly life and offered his petitions with fervent cries and tears, who was unable to save himself, but had to entreat one who was able to save him and beg to be released from death? Surely not God the Word, immortal, impassible, incorporeal, the memory of whom, as the prophet says, brings rejoicing and release from tears ("for he has wiped away every tear from every face," and another prophet elsewhere says, "I remembered God and rejoiced").⁸⁶ It is he who crowns with godliness those who dwell with him, who knows all things before they come to be. It is he who has all that belongs to the Father, who is the unchangeable image of his parent, and who shows the Father within himself. But what he took up to himself from David's seed was something mortal, passible, afraid of death. Yet even so, he was able to destroy death's power because he was united to the God who took him up to himself. It was he who walked in all righteousness and said to John, "Let it be so now; it is right for us to do this so as to fulfill all righteousness."⁸⁷ This was the one who accepted the nomination to the high priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. This was the one who was beset by his own nature's weakness; he was not the almighty Word of God. That is why the blessed Paul said a little further back, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet

84. Heb 5.4-5.

86. Is 25.8; Ps 76.4 LXX.

85. Heb 5.7-10.

87. Mt 3.15.

did not sin.”⁸⁸ Hence, it was the nature that was taken from us for our sake, not the one who for our salvation had taken it; it was the one that felt our sufferings in his trial without becoming sinful. But then this is exactly the point made by the verse he refers to at the opening of this anathema: “Think about the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus, who was faithful to the one who created him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house.”⁸⁹ But then no orthodox thinker would call the unmade and uncreated Word of God a creature, he who is co-eternal with the Father; whereas the man, one of us, the one who was taken up, would be so called. Neither was God the Word, who was from God himself, ordained as our high priest; it was he who was of David’s seed who became our high priest and atoning sacrifice because he was sinless. He offered his very self to God for our sake because he possessed within himself God the Word, who was from God, united and connected to him inseparably.

Cyril’s Defense

When Israel had offended the God of the universe and provoked him to anger, the prophet Jeremiah lamented, “Who will make my head a source of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears? Then would I weep for this people day and night.”⁹⁰ Personally, I believe that these words are no more applicable to the Israelites than they are to those who cannot control their own mouths when speaking of Christ: “bold and arrogant people who are abusive of the ineffable glory,” as the Scriptures have it.⁹¹ As a result of excessive stupidity they have rejected the straight and irreproachable road of Christ-like godliness, made for themselves paths that lead in other directions, and marred the beauty of the truth with dangerous notions of their own invention. That is why they are ones who are really deserving of our mournful lamentations. These people who have opted to hold opinions so universally despicable, they should take heed when we say: “You are in error because you do not know the

88. Heb 4.15.

90. Jer 9.1.

89. Heb 3.1–2.

91. Cf. 2 Pt 2.10.

Scriptures,"⁹² nor do you know the great and glorious mystery of the Incarnation. You see, the divinely inspired Scriptures declare to us that Emmanuel is God-made-man, and they assert that the Word of God the Father partook of flesh and blood like our own⁹³ and became flesh,⁹⁴ that is, a man, not by some sort of change or alteration, but by the power of the ineffable union. This is why we say that there is a single Lord Jesus Christ, a single faith, and a single holy baptism,⁹⁵ whereas these others have abandoned orthodoxy and set up their own proud, stubborn minds in place of the Holy Scriptures. They are interested only in what they feel like and so argue that a man was taken up by God the Word in line with what one of the holy prophets once said: "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruits, and the Lord took me up from the sheep";⁹⁶ or as the blessed David said, "The Lord takes up the meek,"⁹⁷ obviously meaning a contingent spiritual possession by means of his will, grace, and sanctification, in the same way that we too are, as it says, "one spirit" because we are bound to the Lord.⁹⁸ But this is not how God was made man, nor is it how he partook of flesh and blood like our own; it is rather a case of a man being possessed by God in exactly the same way in which he does for a prophet, an apostle, or any other holy man. Was the divinely inspired Paul lying to those of us who are sanctified in the faith when he very clearly said of the Only-Begotten that, though he was rich, yet he became poor for us?⁹⁹ Surely not! For he that proclaims the truth never lies. Let us examine now the question of who this rich man was, and how he became poor. They are bold enough to believe, and to suggest, that a man was taken up by God, in which case how could such a man become poor after being decorated with honors that were above his nature, given that he was glorified? If he had not been glorified, then they would be demeaning the notion of a "taking up" by bringing it right down to the inferior level of human limitations. But the latter is an unacceptable conclu-

92. Mt 22.29.

94. Cf. Jn 1.14.

96. Am 7.14-15.

98. 1 Cor 6.17.

93. Cf. Heb 2.14.

95. Cf. Eph 4.5.

97. Ps 147.6 (146.6 LXX).

99. Cf. 2 Cor 8.9.

sion, so he who was taken up cannot also be he who became poor. The inescapable conclusion is that the rich man was God who entered into human poverty. How did this happen, then? Come, let us think about what it entails. We have acknowledged that he is unchangeable by nature; he did not abandon his own nature and transform into that of the flesh; he remained what he was, namely, God. Where, then, can we locate the lowliness of his poverty? Is it in the fact of one like us being taken up, as the flatterers of Nestorius's profanities have dared to suggest? What sort of poverty or self-emptying would *that* entail? All he seems to want to do is to honor a man like one of us! Since the God of the universe, in acting rightly, cannot be damaged, how could he have become poor? The answer is that, being by nature God and the Son of God the Father, he became a man and was begotten of David's seed in the flesh and so endured the limitations that are natural to a servant, namely, the humanity that is in the form of God the Father, through and in whom are all things and who is the Creator of everything. After becoming a man, those human limitations were no longer disgraceful, for once he had made becoming human acceptable, why would he then reject the means by which we could see that he had really become one of us for our sakes? Were we to detach him from human deeds and words, then there would, dare we admit, be no difference between us and those who completely deprive him of his flesh, who do not believe in the divinely inspired Scripture, and who completely throw out the mystery of the Incarnation, the salvation and hope of the world, the faith, and the Resurrection.

It is equally possible, of course, that someone will object that it is belittling and inappropriate that God the Word should cry out, or be afraid of death, that he should pray against taking the cup of suffering or be appointed to the office of priesthood. Yes, I would agree. Such things are somewhat ignoble by comparison with the transcendent divine nature and glory, but it is precisely in them that we can see the poverty that he willingly endured for us. Whenever you find the dishonor arising from his self-emptying to be a problem, wonder all the more greatly at how much the Son loves us; you say that it is something

mean, but he willingly did it for your sake. He wept like a man to protect your own tears. For salvation's sake he was afraid and at times allowed his flesh to suffer as it ought to, so that he might render us less fearful; he prayed that the cup be taken away, so that the cross might condemn the Jews' godlessness; in his humanity he was called weak, so that he might put a stop to your weakness; in prayer he reached up even in supplication, so that he might declare the Father's ear to be accessible even to your prayers. He slept, so that you might learn not to sleep when tempted, but rather to reach out in prayer. He even reproached the sleeping holy apostles and said, "Did you not have the strength to keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."¹⁰⁰ He set forth his own actions as an example of holy living for the benefit of everyone on earth. Why did he thus make human weakness his very own? It was so that we might believe that he really did become a man while still remaining what he was, God. What I cannot understand is how these men feign to acknowledge a single Christ, Son, and Lord, that the same individual is both God and man, while refusing to call the Word begotten of God, after he had become a man, the high priest and apostle of our confession. Instead of this they go on to assert that he should simply be called an individual man from David's seed. Presumably they are afraid that they might actually make light of Nestorius's heresy and get caught thinking along the right lines! This is what Nestorius said:

This man is the one who was made a faithful high priest toward God (for he came into existence, not pre-existing eternally); this was the man—you heretic!—who progressed little by little towards the dignity of high priesthood.

Then, so as to confirm the truth of this (or so he thought), he concluded by saying:

It was about this that John proclaimed in the Gospels, "Jesus advanced in maturity, wisdom, and grace."¹⁰¹

100. Mt 26.40.

101. Lk 2.52.

And then also:

Do not turn away from faith in the only one who is our compassionate high priest, our kinsman, our foundation. For he was sent as the blessing that was promised to Abraham's seed, so as to offer the sacrifice of his body on his own behalf, and on behalf of his race.

The most ardent fan of this nonsense of Nestorius's is of course our good friend Theodoret, who is not embarrassed to write that:

[The divine nature] took human nature into itself and appointed it above the level of normal high priests, as Paul said, "Every high priest is taken from among the people and is appointed to deal with matters relating to God on the people's behalf. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray because he is himself subject to weakness. This is why he needs to make an offering for his own sins as well as for the people's." [Heb 5.1-3]

Has he not gone here as far as he wanted and made out that Emmanuel is a man just like us? Are not his ideas and those others we have just mentioned closely related, and do they not give birth to just as awful a blasphemy? Tell me now, are you not afraid of what manner of priesthood belonged to Christ our universal Savior? Would you say that, because of the plan of salvation, it is inappropriate that God the Word should carry out a priest's function in a human way? Throw off the mask and deny, without pretense, that the Word became man and that this is why he may also be called high priest. Do you see him sacrificing to the Father, as if to some other, better God? Have you watched him sacrificing the whole burnt offerings in the same way as do those who have been selected from among men, who are able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray because they themselves are subject to human weakness? Have you not realized that he consecrates everybody's faith, meaning their confession of faith in himself and in the all-holy Father? Tell me, is it not part of a human priest's function to require faith of those who have offered themselves in the Spirit as a sweet-smelling savor?¹⁰² See how there is another way that he is God, even if one allows that he carries out a human priest's

102. Cf. Eph 5.2.

activity for the sake of the plan of salvation, for he sits together with God the Father and may be visualized in his magnificence upon the heavenly throne. Does the fact of his humanity cause you confusion? Does the fact that he is also divine not release you from those fears? You do not allow yourself to see how these things show that Emmanuel is both God and man, but instead carry on blindly rampaging far beyond the very worst godlessness in saying that he was perfected in his virtue through his actions, and that he progressed little by little towards the dignity of high priesthood. If he so progressed, how can he have emptied himself or become poor? If he is perfected in virtue, then obviously he must have become perfect from a previous state of imperfection and over a period of time; but whatever is in a state of imperfection of virtue must lie under conviction of guilt, and what is guilty lies under sin. In which case, how can it be written about him that he did not commit sin?¹⁰³ You dared to write the following:

Who is this person (he means the one who is the priest) who was made perfect by virtuous deeds rather than being so naturally? Who is this person who learned obedience through his trials without knowing anything about it before those trials? And who is this person who lived a godly life and offered his petitions with fervent cries and tears, who was unable to save himself, but had to entreat one who was able to save him?

What a brazen and outrageous thing to say! How many tears need we to shed to cleanse of sin all who choose to think that way? If you accept the union, how can you not know that your discussion was really about God made man? He humbled himself for your sake, yet you profanely proclaim, "Be it far from you; Lord, may this never be to you," upon hearing which he retorts, "Get behind me, Satan; you are a stumbling block to me."¹⁰⁴ But then at the end of his argument he says:

[I]t was he who was of David's seed who was our high priest ... because he possessed within himself God the Word ... united and connected to him inseparably.

103. Cf. 1 Pt 2.22.

104. Mt 16.22-23.

How can you say that God the Word was united to the one from David's seed, if you have already attributed the priesthood to the latter only? If the union is a genuine one, then there can in no way be two; Christ is to be understood only as a single, solitary individual arising out of both.

It is therefore quite clear that they are only pretending to believe in the union. They creep up on the unwary, when they are really thinking in terms of an external, contingent connection, something that can be said of us as well since we are proclaimed by the Spirit to be in fellowship with his divine nature. So pay absolutely no attention to all this stuff and nonsense of theirs, but instead focus on the orthodox, blameless faith, and the words of the evangelists and apostles.

☩ Eleventh Anathema

If any do not confess that the Lord's flesh has the power to give life and that it belongs to the Word of God the Father himself, but think that it belongs to another individual besides him who is connected to him as a matter of honor, or as if he were merely in possession of a divine indwelling, rather than, as we already said, that it is life-giving because it has become a property of the Word, who has the strength to give life to all, let them be anathema.

Theodoret's Critique

In my opinion he is deliberately making the whole thing too complicated so as to cover up his heterodoxy and so that no one will notice that his doctrine is the same as that of the heretics. But there is nothing stronger than the truth, which blows away the clouds of deceit with its own beams of light. Thus enlightened, we shall now prove his doctrine to be unorthodox. First of all, he never refers to the flesh as being "rational," nor does he ever acknowledge that the man who was taken up was a whole man. Instead, he always merely says "flesh," just as is the case in the Apollinarian doctrines. Furthermore, interspersed among his arguments he introduces the idea of "mixture,"

though without using that word as such. Hence he must mean that the Lord's flesh had no soul, for he says, "If any do not confess that the Lord's flesh belongs to the Word of God the Father himself, but think that it belongs to another individual besides, let them be anathema." It clearly follows from this formulation that he does not acknowledge that God the Word took to himself a soul, but merely flesh alone, while the Word himself is in the place of the soul for the flesh.

We, however, say that the Lord's soul-possessing and rational flesh has the power to give life because of the life-giving divinity that was united to it. Hence, even he himself unintentionally confesses that there is a difference between the two natures, since he speaks of "flesh" and of "God the Word," calling the former "his own flesh." So then, God the Word was not changed into the nature of flesh; he possesses the nature that he took as his own flesh and by being united to it made it life-giving.

Cyril's Defense

Those who out of ignorance have fallen away from orthodox, accurate concepts and who not only say, "We have made falsehood our hope, and by falsehood shall we be protected,"¹⁰⁵ are unintentionally pronouncing judgment against the very things they have opted for. They have not borne in mind that the divinely inspired Scripture says, "Judge with a righteous judgment," and, "A false witness shall not go unpunished."¹⁰⁶ For I say that the holy body of Christ, our universal Savior, has the power to give life; it is not simply that of a common man like ourselves; it really belongs to the Word, who brings about life for everything, whose body is his own in just the same way that we might say that our bodies belong to us. But this honorable friend of ours never misses an opportunity to abuse me in any way possible, even though he actually concedes my main points, and so he still accuses me of being guilty of the Apollinarian heresy. He is not ashamed to say that I am concealing the idea of mixture, that is, confusion, under the guise of different words,

105. Is 28.15.

106. Zec 7.9; Prv 19.5.

and that I assert that the flesh which was united to the Word was without a soul! My good fellow, anyone might say such a thing, and advisedly so. Would you throw the same accusations even against the blessed evangelist John? For it was he that said that “the Word became flesh.”¹⁰⁷ Will you vilify him, too, and suggest that he has forgotten to mention that this flesh of the Lord’s was rational and possessed a soul? What about when you hear Christ himself speaking—he who is the Savior of us all? He said, “I tell you the truth: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you,” and, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him,” and also, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”¹⁰⁸ Attack these sayings, if you dare! After all, he refers here only to flesh and fails completely to mention the rational soul! If you had any insight or common sense, you would realize that sometimes this creature that is made of both soul and body, namely, the man, is referred to only by the flesh, as it says, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”¹⁰⁹ So if someone says the Word has become flesh, then he knows perfectly well that he means also the rational soul. But then, as I said at the start, he covers up the fact that he does not have an opposing argument by being deceptive and polemical, in the hope that he might seem to be making some sort of point. It did not seem, however, to the holy Fathers that a man had been taken up by God. They did not think of it in that way. Why? Because they preferred to say that the Word of God became a man by being united to flesh that was in possession of a rational soul (the union being wholly unconfused and free from change, for God the Word is unalterable). And this is what I think, too.

Twelfth Anathema

If any do not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh, tasted death in the flesh, and became the firstborn from the dead, because as God he is both Life and the Life-giver, let them be anathema.

107. Jn 1.14.

109. Is 40.5.

108. Jn 6.53, 56, 51.

Theodoret's Critique

The property of suffering belongs to that which is passible. The impassible is above suffering. Therefore, it was the form of the servant that suffered, the form of God of course being together with it. The latter allowed the former to experience suffering because salvation is born of suffering, and he made those sufferings his very own by being united to them. So it was not God who suffered. It was the man, one of us, whom God had taken up. This is also why the blessed Isaiah predicted that he would "be a man of affliction and well acquainted with pain."¹¹⁰ Even Christ the Master himself asked the Jews, "Why do you seek to kill me, a *man* who has told you the truth?"¹¹¹ It is not the one who has life in himself who is killed. It is the one who possesses the mortal nature. This is what the Lord taught on another occasion when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up."¹¹² So the one who was of David was destroyed, while the Only-Begotten, God the Word, he who was born impassibly of the Father before the ages, raised up the one that was destroyed.

Cyril's Defense

Of course I agree that the nature of the Word is impassible. I would think that everyone is well aware of this, nor would be so crazy as to suggest that the ineffable nature (which is really above all natures), which is in no way capable of suffering, was possessed by human weaknesses. The whole plan of redemption must have been ingeniously designed since suffering brought about the salvation of the world, even though it is impossible for the Word who is begotten of God to suffer in respect of his own nature. For he made the passible body his very own, the result of which is that one can say that he suffered by means of something naturally passible, even while he himself remains impassible in respect of his own nature; and since he willingly suffered in the flesh, for this very reason he is called, and actually is, the Savior of all. It is just as Paul says, "By the grace of God he tasted death

110. Is 53.3.

112. Jn 2.19.

111. Jn 8.40.

on behalf of all."¹¹³ The divinely inspired Peter will testify to the same thing, rightly saying, "since Christ suffered for us,"¹¹⁴ not in his divine nature, but in his flesh. In what way, then, can we say that the Lord of glory has been crucified?¹¹⁵ How is it that the one through whom and in whom everything exists (as the blessed Paul has it)¹¹⁶ is appointed by God the Father as the head of the body, the church, and how is it that he became also the first-born from the dead?¹¹⁷ Surely it was because he took personal ownership of the sufferings that pertained to his own flesh. The Lord of glory could not have become a normal person like us. Maybe, however, you would at least say this, that the fact of the union is enough to demonstrate that the single Christ is to be identified with the crucified Lord. Therefore, let them predicate all these things of him and confess that God the Word is the Savior who remains impassible in his divine nature while also suffering in the flesh, just as Peter said. For the body that tasted death belonged to him because the union was totally genuine. How else would he be "a Jew in respect of the flesh, Christ who is God over all and forever blessed, amen"?¹¹⁸ Into whose death were we baptized? Whose resurrection do we acknowledge when we are justified? Although in respect of his own nature God the Word is above dying, he is actually life itself. Were we, then, baptized into the death of an ordinary man? And is it in *him* that we put our trust and are justified? Or do we, in fact, proclaim the death of God made man, who suffered death in his flesh for us? Do we escape the grief caused by sin through his resurrection? For we were bought "at a price," "not with corruptible things, silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without guilt or stain."¹¹⁹ It would not be hard to say lots more than this on the subject, and we could provide citations from the holy Fathers, but these things, I deem, will suffice for those who are keen to understand. After all, it is written, "Grant a wise man an opportunity, and he will become wiser; instruct a just man, and he will accept further instruction."¹²⁰

113. Heb 2.9.

115. Cf. 1 Cor 2.8.

117. Cf. Col 1.17-18.

119. 1 Cor 6.20; 1 Pt 1.18-19.

114. 1 Pt 4.1.

116. Cf. Heb 2.10.

118. Rom 9.5.

120. Prv 9.9.